

The HARPSICHORD



Sylvia Marlowe
America's First Lady of the Harpsichord

HARPSICHORD

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THE COVER

Sylvia Marlowe, America's First Lady of the Harpsichord, is shown at one of her Dowd harpsichords shortly before beginning one of her famous concerts. This cover announces an exclusive interview with Miss Marlowe which begins on page 6 of this issue.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The International Society of Harpsichord Builders is proud to give special recognition to the following Contributing Members whose interest and generosity aid materially in the development and preservation of the instruments and music of the baroque period and assists in furthering the various projects and programs of the Society.

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GO FOR BAROQUE

by Hal Haney



Every morning at about 7:55 I drive to the Santa Fe branch of the Denver Post Office to pick up the mail for the Society. There is always something there be-

cause our members (bless them) are always generous with their ideas, suggestions and comments. In the past few weeks our post box has been particularly full and gratifying. I'll give you some examples.

Mrs. Patricia U. Bowman of Seattle, Washington sent the Society a check for a Sustaining Membership which is always most helpful and a compliment to the Society and what we are trying to do. Within a few days, Mr. David J. Way, President of Zuckermann Harpsichords sent in his membership fee which was another Sustaining Membership. We are deeply appreciative to these new members for their kindness and concern. Our Contributing, Sustaining and Associate Patron Members help make the Society and our journal possible. We have no income other than our membership fees and the small amount of advertising we place. We hope that someday we will receive help through grants, foundations or estates but so far nothing along those lines has materialized.

Since "The Harpsichord" is often used as a reference work, we try to double check all our sources of information so that the facts we give, are indeed facts. The following letter from instrument maker Hugh Gough illustrates a case where our original source of information was correct, but our

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interpretation was incorrect.

"Dear Mr. Haney:

"I was delighted to see how well my short article on the Ruckers harpsichord and its photographs came out, but I was sorry to see that in your kind note about me you made a mistake which I understand came about from a misreading of a sentence in Mr. Zuckermann's book. He states the following on page 127. 'He began spending time at the Dolmetsch workshop on weekends, and making some instruments.' You interpreted this as meaning that I 'worked for a time making instruments in the Dolmetsch shop.' Now this is not true. I was fortunate in knowing the Dolmetsch family, and did indeed take some lessons in clavichord playing with Arnold Dolmetsch. Like all of my generation I was influenced by his work, and indeed greatly admired much of what was done in Haslemere and was inspired by what I saw and heard, but my own work took rather different directions.

"Yours Sincerely, Hugh Gough"

My sincerest thanks to Mr. Gough for bringing this error to our attention so we could pass the correct information on to you.

I first met harpsichord builder Herbert Wm. Burton several years ago in the Coliseum Restaurant just down the street from Lincoln Center in New York City. Of course I had known of his work before that. In fact, an article "Burton Harpsichords Take Wings" appeared in Volume I, No. 1 of "The Harpsichord". Some time back I gave an hour and a half impromptu recital on one of his instruments in a music emporium in Kansas City and later attended a national convention of the Piano Technicians Guild in Denver at which he conducted a harpsichord workshop. In other words, Herbert Wm. Burton not only works hard at supplying harpsichord kits to prospective builders, he works hard at helping spread his enthusiasm for the instrument to others. I just learned from our mail box that Herb is offering a two-week workshop in harpsichord construction beginning September 6 through the Department of Creative

Arts of Purdue University. The purpose of the course is to acquaint prospective harpsichord builders with the procedures involved in assembling an instrument from a kit and to instruct present harpsichord owners in maintenance of their own instruments. Several harpsichords will be built during the two-week period and those attending the workshop will have the option of purchasing their own kit or gaining firsthand knowledge of assembly procedures by observing and participating in kit construction. The workshop enrollment fee is \$20 and living accommodations are available at reasonable rates at the Purdue Memorial Union. Details are being handled by L. E. Mellvin, Department of Creative Arts, Music Division, Stanley Coulter Hall, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana. Herbert Wm. Burton has pioneered many advances in the harpsichord world and he is generous to share this knowledge with others.

We have many new advertisers in this issue and we are particularly happy to introduce a new section, *Parts, Supplies & Services*. Already three companies occupy this space; R. K. Lee, O'Brien Harpsichord Company, and Harpsichord Service Cooperative. We receive so many inquiries from members wanting to know where to purchase strings, tuning pins, keyboards, etc. that we hope to be able to expand this department to include all phases of harpsichord building, repairing and maintenance. We are happy to receive a display ad from Schober Harpsichords who just recently introduced a new harpsichord kit. I have not yet seen or played this instrument but plan to visit with Richard Dorf, creator of the Schober Harpsichord, in the near future.

Speaking of harpsichord kits, there is a Society Informational Bulletin available to members which lists all kit manufacturers and suppliers of which we have knowledge. It's free. Just send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Harpsichord Kits, P. O. Box 4323, Denver, Colorado 80204 and we'll send the list out to you in the very next mail.

Hal Haney

SYMPATHETIC VIBRATIONS

The Key Question

by Wallace Zuckermann

For a long time a myth has existed among harpsichordists that the "narrow" octave span denotes an "authentic" antique or copy thereof, whereas the "wide" octave span is "wrong" and applies only to modern keyboards. For some reason, the question of what old keyboards really did in actual-fact measure, has been neglected by all the writers on the subject, including myself; yet this question has an important bearing on the modern harpsichord. Should we, indeed, copy the narrow span (if that were really proved "right") or should we consider the fact that most modern players get started on the piano and must then be forced to adapt to the narrower span of the harpsichord keyboard, and thus favor standardizing harpsichord keyboards to piano octave spans?

The question probably has no simple answer. Because of the popularity of the French prototype, the narrow octave span is now used almost exclusively by the better builders. But this had led some of them to use the narrow span even on Italian harpsichords where it can be proved to be wrong, just because all their keyboards are standardized to the narrow span. The German factories, on the other hand, have decided to copy only a single feature from the old harpsichords, namely the narrow octave span, and this only because their keyboard suppliers are able to do it for them.

Before going into the question of worldwide standardization, and which would be a good standard to follow, let us look at the table of actual key measurements. I have given



the measurement of three octaves in mm, which is the only way any accuracy can be obtained. The length of the keyhead is also given in mm. For those who are used to the inch measurements, the following reference table might be useful:

1 Octave Span in inches	3 Octave Span in mm
6-3/16"	471.5
6-1/4"	476.2
6-5/16"	481
6-3/8"	485.8
6-7/16"	490.5
6-1/2"	495.3
6-9/16"	500
6-5/8"	504.8

As a further reference, we should keep in mind that the modern piano keyboard (as made by Pratt, Read, in Ivorytown, Conn., and British Piano Actions in Wales, for example) is based on a distance of 13.7 mm from key center to key center for a total of 493.2 over the three octave span.

The modern span is often glibly characterized as being 6½", but according to our reference table 493 mm falls central between 6-7/16" and 6½". The narrow span is often characterized as being 6¼". Well, let us now look at the table, made up of 9 examples from the French school, 7 examples from Germany, 9 examples from England, 6 Flemish instruments, and 13 Italians. Forty-four instruments is perhaps not as big a sample as would be necessary to give a clear cut answer to the key span problem, but even this sample makes it clear that there can be no clear cut answer. In the table, "Smiths" stands for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, "Edinburgh" stands for the Raymond Russell Collection in Edinburgh, "Corcoran" for the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, "Nurnberg" for Germanisches National Museum, Nurnberg, "Munich" for Stadtsches Museum, Munich, "Brussels" for Brussels Conservatory, "Hague" for Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, "Paris" for the Conservatoire Nationale de Paris, and "Chambure" for instruments belonging to Mme de Chambure in Paris. If information has

been omitted, it was not available. I am indebted to the kindness of Scott Odell of the Smithsonian and John Barnes of the Raymond Russell Collection for supplying some of the figures.

Adding up the figures for the French instruments and dividing by the number of instruments, we get the average of 472.3, which is closer to the 6-3/16" octave span than the 6¼" one commonly assumed to be French. Next we average the German figures. In doing this, I have left out the pianos which, though interesting, are atypical. Here we get an average of 488.7, between the 6¾" and the 6-7/16" span. The English average, again leaving out pianos, comes to 484.6, which is close to 6¾". The Flemish average works out to 492.3, or very close to the modern span of 493.2: and finally the Italian average comes to 491.2, again close to the modern span.

The following table of averages will make the picture clearer.

School	3-Octave Average	1-Octave Inch Equiv.
French	472.3	6-3/16"
English	484.6	6-3/8"
German	488.7	6-13/32"
Italian	491.2	6-7/16" plus
Flemish	492.3	6-15/32"

Keeping in mind that the sample is comparatively small, and that the practice of obtaining averages is probably misleading, we nonetheless find that two of the five traditions are almost identical to the modern span. Two other traditions, the English and German, are closer to the modern span than to the French span. This would isolate the French span as atypical. It is idle to speculate whether the narrow French span may have originated in the desire to squeeze as many keys into ravaged instruments as was possible (almost three keys can be fitted into the difference between the French and Flemish span). The fact remains that we must decide whether to copy the atypical French span, or the more typical wider spans.

If we were starting afresh, a good point could be made for the modern

span. It would save the agony of going from piano and organ keyboards to harpsichord keyboards; it would enable makers to buy factory produced keyboards and thus perhaps bring down their prices (most keyboard factories refuse to make the narrower span, although some do); it would provide more space for jacks and strings in the harpsichord, and would distribute tension on hitchpin rail and pressure on bridge over a wider area; finally, it makes a more comfortable keyboard for people with large hands and thick fingers. The case for the narrower span rests mostly on the fact that the good harpsichords have them. It also reduces the width of the instrument somewhat resulting in a more elegant appearance.

A good case could be made for harpsichord makers getting together and standardizing many now totally divergent features, and the keyboard might be a good place to start. But would the makers be able to agree on what standard to choose? I doubt it. The makers of the narrow span would be reluctant to give it up, and I, for one, would hate to part with the modern span, since my suppliers, tools, jigs, and moulds, are all based on it. In the meantime, I can at least maintain that I am historically as accurate as the so called "correct" octave span.

Wallace Zuckermann

HINTS from the Experts

Anson Overdorff of Rockville, Maryland has discovered that white vinegar (dilute acetic acid) will rapidly soften *animal hide* glues such as Franklin's, Le Page's, Roger's, etc., or the glue-pot varieties which are soaked, melted and used hot. It can be applied with a dropper and is excellent for the removal of bridges, old key-end felts, etc. Heating the vinegar will speed up its action. Don Galt, Seattle, Washington, uses ammonia (an alkaline) as a softening agent for white glue such as Elmer's. Ammonia dissolves some dyes so be careful where you place colored felt which is saturated with ammonia.

TABLE OF ACTUAL KEY MEASUREMENTS TAKEN FROM ANTIQUE INSTRUMENTS

School	Maker	Date	Instrument	Present Location	3-Oct. span in mm	Key-head in mm
French	Taskin	1769		Edinburgh	475	36
French	Goujon-Kbd by Blanchet	1749?	Harps	Paris	473	34
French	de Richard	1623	Spinnet	Paris	466	28
French	Des Ruisseaux	1670	Harps	Chambure	463	33
French	B. Stehlin	1760	Harps	Smiths.	474	35.5
French	J. M. DeDe Ban	1770		Corcoran	480	35.5
French	Delin			Brussels	473	
French	Delin		Clavidyth	Hague	473	
French	Ruckers-Taskin	1780	Harps	Paris	474	38
German	Hass	1764	Harps	Edinburgh	491	41
German	Stein?	18th C	Piano	Paris	469	39
German	Anon.	18th C	Clavichord	Paris	480	33
German	Hass	1740	3-man. Harps	Paris	495	41
German	Anon.	18th C	Piano	Chambure	477	39
German	J. A. Stein	1773	Piano	Smiths.	470	37
German	Schmidt	1778	Piano	Smiths.	475	36.5
English	Hitchcock	C 1710	Spinnet	Smiths.	478	36
English	Shudi	C 1743	Harps	Smiths.	484	38.5
English	J. & A. Kirckman	1776	Harps	Smiths.	485	4
English	Broadwood	1794	Piano	Smiths.	489	41.5
English	Shudi	1744	Harps	Hague	484	
English	Hancock	1720		Edinburgh	492	38
English	Folkener	1773		Edinburgh	485	40
English	Broadwood	1793	Piano	Edinburgh	487	43
English	Longman & Broderip	Late 18 C	Piano	Paris	488	40
Flemish	Dulcken	1745	Harps	Smiths.	490	33.5
Flemish	A. Ruckers	1620	Virginal	Smiths.	500	29
Flemish	J. D. Dulcken	C 1755		Nurnberg	489	
Flemish	Leenhouwer	1789		Hague	486	
Flemish	Dulcken			Brussels	489	
Flemish	Ruckers	1618		Paris	500	30
Italian	Dequoco	1694	Harps	Smiths.	490	33
Italian	Anon.	17 C	Virginal	Smiths.	494	37
Italian	Anon.	1693	Harps	Smiths.	505	35
Italian	Ridolfi	1662		Nurnberg	476	
Italian	Ridolfi	1665	Harps	Smiths.	486	35
Italian	Anon.	C 1600	Virginal	Munich	476	
Italian	Bertolotti	1585		Edinburgh	499	37
Italian	Anon.	C 1600	Harps	Edinburgh	489	32
Italian	Petrus Orlandus	1710	Ottavina	Edinburgh	482	30
Italian	Cristofori	1690	Harps	Paris	482	32
Italian	de Faby	1677	Harps	Paris	499	39
Italian	Baffo	1579	Harps	Paris	505	39
Italian	Pisauri	1554	Harps	Paris	503	34

Interview with Sylvia Marlowe

Sylvia Marlowe has perhaps done more to popularize the harpsichord than any other artist, including Wanda Landowska. Miss Marlowe played weekly concerts which were heard by millions of music lovers. Just one of her N.B.C. "Coffee Concerts" could be heard by more people than the average artist could play to in an entire lifetime, and these concerts were played every week for years. Her list of recordings is very long and her concerts have taken her all over the world.

New York's Fifth Avenue was preparing for the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade the day I visited Sylvia Marlowe. Her duplex apartment is located just off Fifth Avenue in the east 60's. At four o'clock, the time of the appointment, I pressed the button to her apartment and someone inside responded by releasing the electric lock on the door. Once inside, an open but dark stairway spiraled upward perhaps three floors and standing at the 2nd level was Sylvia Marlowe.

She is a smallish woman who radiates energy in all directions at once. Her apartment was large and uncluttered. A light blue and gold Dowd double-manual harpsichord was placed against one wall and across the room a large Challis clavichord stood open, with music in place. The walls were covered with about 30 paintings, most of them done by her husband, an artist, who also painted the inside lid of her Dowd harpsichord.

Miss Marlowe spoke rapidly with a resonant, almost husky voice which she modulated well to emphasize a point. Her intense inner energy forces thoughts to come tumbling out in conversation which consists of fragmentary sentences condensed into outline forms and stripped of any unnecessary embellishment. As soon as she knows that her listener understands the thought she has started she switches mid-sentence with electronic speed to another thought, another

idea, or another part of her fascinating life. For the benefit of the reader, we have used her completed sentences in this interview.

After being served tea and cheese cake, the interview began.

HANEY: Can you tell us how you first became interested in the harpsichord?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: I started as a pianist. But going back to the very beginning, I have a very musical family. My father was very musical and my uncle is a conductor, so I had a lot of music during my childhood. I rapidly discovered that I liked old music very much. Right from the start I loved playing Bach, Handel, Mozart. Of course I studied Chopin, Liszt and other composers, but I continued to like the earlier works.

At some point in my education I received a fellowship to the Juillard School. This was as a pianist. However, I never really liked the atmosphere in large schools, so when I was given the opportunity to go to Paris to study, I took it.

I had many composer friends in Paris and the period was a very enlightening one for me. I studied organ, piano, theory and counterpoint with Nadia Boulanger. Of course I had studied organ at Cornell before I went to Paris.

At this time I really wasn't acquainted with the harpsichord, but I was interested in keyboard instruments, especially the piano, organ and early music.

I was in Paris when I heard the harpsichord for the first time. It was a thrilling experience which I have never forgotten. The harpsichordist was Wanda Landowska and, of course, her instrument was a Pleyel. I had never heard a harpsichord and was absolutely enchanted with it. And as strange as it may seem, I determined at that point that I wanted to own and play a harpsichord. All this and I really knew nothing about the instrument.

I studied with Nadia Boulanger for the four years I was in Paris and when I returned to America, I was awarded a National Music Award to perform the whole and complete Well Tempered Clavier for C.B.S. I did these works on the piano for I was not at that time playing harpsichord.

My great passion was Bach, and of course my interest in the harpsichord grew. But the problem then, was where to get a harpsichord. This was years ago and there were no modern builders. Harpsichords were difficult to find outside museums and even the instruments in museums were little more than mute pieces of furniture.

I finally found a lady here in New York who had a harpsichord and she let me practice for 50 cents an hour. This was a Pleyel. I had no teacher. No one told me what it was all about. It was necessary for me to figure it out by myself. And, as you know, the Pleyel is much different from other harpsichords. As an example, the pedals are positive when they are up, while with most other instruments the pedals are positive when they are down. I had to figure this out without help.

HANEY: This happened while you were in New York?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Oh yes. I was born in New York. I've lived here all my life. In fact, I've lived in this apartment for more than 30 years. I supported myself by giving piano lessons, and also I was doing some concert work for C.B.S. and N.B.C.

One day I heard of a lady who had a harpsichord for sale. It was a very fancy, very large, white Pleyel. It had gold trimmings and the price was \$1,000. Of course this was some time ago when \$1,000 was more like \$5,000 is today. At that time I didn't have \$1,000 I could afford to use for a harpsichord, so I borrowed it from Virgil Thompson. I remember Virgil saying, "Well, if you don't pay up, I can always have the harpsichord since I have always wanted a harpsichord

anyhow."

Well, I did pay up, of course, so I was able to keep the harpsichord. That was my first instrument. It weighed about a ton . . . a very heavy instrument.

I worked with this Pleyel daily and loved it. I listened to Landowska recordings, read everything I could find and worked, worked, worked. One must love the harpsichord and not hesitate to devote all your major time to it if you are going to do it at all well. Then my first job as a harpsichordist appeared.

I was making a record someplace. It was my first recording for which I got paid nothing. It was called "From Bach to Boogie Woogie" and has been out of print now for a long time. Somebody in the studio called a friend of his who was head of the Rainbow Room, which is a night club on the 65th floor of Rockefeller Center. I had at that time never even been in a night club. He came to the studio to listen to me and offer me a job at an enormous salary. I was terrified! I had never done this before. I played on a revolving stage with glamorous spotlights and the whole bit. I would play a few classical things then some boogie and other popular numbers. I learned a lot from the job.

One thing I learned was to start out softly which always got their attention. People would be drinking and talking and when I would start playing quietly, the room would start to quiet down. Eventually everyone was listening to the harpsichord which, to them, was a very strange instrument. Then I would play contemporary pieces. The reviews were good and since no one was playing harpsichord at that time in night clubs, I got a lot of excellent publicity.

This led to guest appearances on many radio programs and I made a lot of money. In those days there was live, coast to coast radio. There was one program called "The Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street" where they had all kinds of big names. I played with them a number of times and was a big hit. I was making money, and enjoying the contemporary music,

but I still wasn't completely happy.

I went to Toscanini's manager and told him that this type of playing wasn't really what I wanted to do. I asked him to let me do a program. I don't remember exactly how it all worked out, but I got my own program on N.B.C. which was a weekly show and lasted ten or fifteen years!

Then I did another program at the same time called "New Portraits of Old Masters" where I did some jazz things. I got a fantastic mail response because no one really knew what a harpsichord was and they liked the sounds I was creating. I was playing in millions of homes all over America. I think this fantastic exposure of the instrument on network radio greatly influenced the growth of interest in the instrument in this country.

That was during the days of the N.B.C. Symphony when they had a terrific orchestra and had subsidiary chamber music programs based on the orchestra.

Since I was the staff harpsichordist, I would be called in to play the widest range of music possible. Sometimes it might be a very simple job and other times it would be quite complicated and difficult.

I remember when Ansermet came to the N.B.C. Symphony for the first time as a guest conductor, they called me and said that they had some music for me to play. "Nothing much" they assured me . . . "A few chords, that's all." They gave me the rehearsal time and the performance time. I got there and they handed me the Frank Martin Concerto! It is a very difficult number to play. To this day, I still think it is difficult. I was given the music on Tuesday and the concert was on Saturday!

At first I said, "I can't do it." But, of course I did it. That was the kind of thing I was called upon to do. Sometimes I would have continuo parts which were not difficult, but at other times I would be given no time at all to prepare for very difficult concerts.

In any case, that aspect of my life came to an end almost simultaneously with the end of the N.B.C. Symphony.



Suddenly they killed all live music.

By that time I had already acquired quite a good reputation because I was on the air constantly coast to coast and there is no bigger publicity than that. One always seems to adjust to changes. When the N.B.C. programs collapsed, I thought it was the end. But I have managed to survive.

I have done a lot of recordings, but even that is coming to an end. At least this particular phase of it because I have been recording for Decca for more than 25 years and now they have cut down their whole classical department. The record business is terrible. This is just coming to an end now, but there are other things. Other record companies, concerts and so on. But that's the way these things work. Ends of eras.

HANEY: Did your active touring start when you left N.B.C.?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Yes, more or less. I'm trying to recall when that was. I believe it was the late 40's or the early 50's. I believe the 50's because I did a big series of concerts in New York in the 50's when I did new works I had commissioned. That's one of the things I am most famous for.

I have commissioned more new contemporary works for the harpsi-

cbord than any other harpsichordist. I have commissioned 30 or 40 new works and many of them very important.

In fact, I just completed a series sponsored by Carnegie Hall where I played many of the works I commissioned in the 50's, so I assume that was the beginning of my concert life and the end of N.B.C.

When I worked for N.B.C. we did much chamber music and we never repeated anything. Therefore I got to know a tremendous quantity of early music. I remember I got to know all the Trio Sonatas, the Solo Sonatas and on and on so now I have an enormous library of marvelous music which is very rarely played.

At this time I started concertising, recording and touring. Actually I don't tour much any more because it is too strenuous. Of course I teach. I have been on the faculty of Mannes College for about 25 years.

HANEY: When you were touring did you carry your own instrument with you?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Mostly, yes. This always poses a problem. This was especially true when I had the Pleyel. Actually I had two Pleyels. One a great huge one with a 16' and a smaller one. My harpsichord would be shipped in a huge crate scheduled, hopefully, to arrive before I did. I used Railway Express in this country, but on my first world tour, the instrument was shipped by air and I found that they handled it much better than Railway Express. Just shipping New York to Boston, you have more chances of having it banged up and broken by Railway Express than shipping around the world by air. Actually, that's one of the reasons I've given up the tours. It takes a lot out of you. Just the mechanics of touring with a harpsichord are enormous.

When I toured in the Far East as well as South America, I took a technician with me who handled everything . . . crating, uncrating, tuning, repairing and so on, but in America I do it almost always by myself. I remember arriving someplace in Kentucky and nothing was working. I had

to take out all the keyboards and start from the bottom up. I spent about 8 hours just being a mechanic. That is a chore. It's also a waste of time.

Now the situation has changed. Many more harpsichords are available in universities. I'm playing a series in Dartmouth and they offered me a harpsichord. They have a Dowd. But in the old days, a harpsichord throughout the country was practically unheard of. In Europe it was possible to pick up a harpsichord, but usually they were not very good and they were not what you wanted. That's the problem there.

In recent years I have cut down on the touring and made a lot of recordings. In many ways I find making recordings much more gratifying because the result exists for longer than the initial concert. With a live recital or concert, once it is finished, it can never never be repeated or brought back. It is gone forever. A recording has a life that can live for a long time. I've done about 50 LP's. I've done the Goldberg Variations and I've done a lot of contemporary music.

Speaking of recordings, I just returned from Florida where I stayed with a friend who had a lot of my recordings. I haven't had time to listen to my own recordings, but while I was relaxing I started to listen to some of them and I was amazed at how much I had done. One forgets.

HANEY: Are you generally pleased with the results of your recordings?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: In general, yes. Of course there are always some records that one prefers more than others, but fortunately the harpsichord records extremely well. All these last years I have been working with a man at Decca who was very good, a wonderful engineer and we took great pains in our work. He's gone now since they got rid of their whole classical division. Now it is all over.

HANEY: Did you find that recording companies, perhaps their engineers or music directors, asked you to play at a tempo or in a manner you did not want to play?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Never. Never. Never. Never. Never. I wouldn't allow

it for a minute! I would get together with the director and we would decide what we were going to do, but when it came to the performance, this was up to me. Never would I be told how to play anything. Heaven sakes no!

HANEY: Your first harpsichords were Pleyels. Did you change later?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: I went from Pleyels to Challis instruments which were closer, in a sense, to the type of music I was playing. The great advantage of the Challis is that it stays in tune and needs very little maintenance. It's a remarkably stable instrument. I ended up with Dowd which do need a lot of care, but I believe they are closer to the old instruments. I like them.

HANEY: When you are scheduled for a big concert, what do you do before the concert?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Rest! This is an interesting subject because when I was younger I discussed this with other performers. Some of them said that they would practice all day long until the minute before they left the house, then just get out on the stage and play.

I tried this once and completely collapsed. I don't have that kind of energy. Sometimes it takes you years to discover the simplest things in life and I discovered that in doing recordings or concerts there are many things that are important.

First, you must be very well prepared. You must know exactly what you want to do. You must really have it.

Then, the next most important thing is to be rested. Also if you are in good health, it helps. The last concert I did, I had the flu and went on stage with a fever of 102.6 degrees. I had to do it for a number of reasons. The house was sold out and one of the composers I had commissioned to write a work had flown over from Paris especially for this concert. Actually it went very well. Fortunately I didn't collapse until after the concert!

But back to preparation.

On the day of the concert, I like to play in the morning on the clavichord then rest completely until time

for the concert. The clavichord is a great blessing because the harpsichord is a very demanding instrument. The clavichord is a very personal instrument. I will go over the program very quietly on the clavichord, thinking it all out . . . playing softly but not performing. One can't play all day then go on in the evening. It's as if a singer would spend the whole day singing, then try to sing all evening. The voice would be gone. It is exactly the same thing with the harpsichord.

That's how I prepare.

It's the same with recordings. I'm perfectly capable of recording for a whole day . . . two sessions. From 10 to 1 and from 2 to 5. That's a big day of recording. But then I want the next day off. Nothing. I want quiet before and quiet after. Some musicians just go on and on and become a regular machine. I don't believe you can do your best work this way. I believe one needs a lot of fat around oneself . . . fat in the sense of insulation. I like a day to be like a white canvas . . . empty . . . not something which is all cluttered. I like a clean, quiet day so I can devote myself to rest, then work, then rest again to prepare for the next work. That's one of the difficulties about New York.

There are so many things to do here, so much going on, that it is difficult to find quiet. I went to a dinner party last night, I rather wish I hadn't. One eats too much, talks too much, smokes too much and so the next day you are not at your best. I've done enough of that. I've had enough of the big social life that I'm very happy to stay in and work quietly.

HANEY: Are you or your playing affected in any way by the audience?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Oh certainly. One can feel or sense an audience. Although New York is the toughest audience, it is, from my point of view, the best. They are right with you. If you are doing a piece which contains some humor you can feel them responding. Whereas, if you play for an audience which has no knowledge of the instrument or its literature, one may as well forget it.

To a certain degree, I must base

my program on where I am playing. If you are playing in some small town where no one has ever heard a harpsichord and you come out with some complex thing, they are not going to get it. While in New York you can't just play the Mozart Turkish March and the Bach Italian Concerto. It is boring for them. That's why I prefer playing in sophisticated places. In London, in Paris, in Berlin. And in this country. Boston is a marvelous place. Chicago is terrible. It is important to have an educated, sophisticated audience for my type of program.

HANEY: Do you have a set plan for outlining your programs or selections?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: No. Not really. We have a general plan beginning with chamber work and ending with ensemble and I play solo works in the middle making a frame. But I think planning a program is like planning a meal. If I find it is very heavy on one side then I lighten it on another. One does not want to have a whole starch meal. One wants a certain variety, based on a high level of quality.

HANEY: You often include compositions in your program which you commissioned. Could you tell us how this began?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: First, all my life I have been friends with composers, more than with instrumentalists. When I went to Paris when I was only 18, I went at the instigation of some composer friends. Aaron Copland was a very old friend as were many other composers. I remember the first work I ever commissioned was the Rieti Partita which is still one of my favorite works. I played it just recently in one of my concerts at Carnegie. Vittorio Rieti was a friend of mine and I loved his work, so I asked him to write a piece for me and he consented. The result of this was the Rieti Partita which is a beautiful work. I've recorded it several times. It is written for harpsichord with string quartet and oboe. It's a charming work. And then came Elliott Carter.

This was before anyone had ever heard of him, but I liked his work and asked him to write for me, and he

did. That's really how I got started commissioning works for the harpsichord. I simply asked composers whom I knew and whose works I liked if they would write for me. I have been very fortunate because in this way, I have been able to extend the literature of the harpsichord. This is especially important because the harpsichord was at one time considered an instrument of the past and I have been able to help change that image. The harpsichord has a very contemporary sound and is now used, as you know, for jazz, for rock, for movies, for commercials, for everything. I play all the big contemporary works as often as possible. But now I am doing something I believe is exciting which might sound a little backward.

For many years pianists have always been playing harpsichord music. Stravinsky was a long time friend of mine and even when he was writing the *Rake's Progress* he said to me that musically he was thinking of me and the harpsichord because it was somewhat of a Mozart opera. I was supposed to do the first performance with the Metropolitan but they decided that the harpsichord was not powerful enough for the big hall. Which is true.

In any case, I was looking through some of the early Stravinsky works which I found enchanting. They are piano pieces but I have played them on the harpsichord. I did them this season and everybody loved them even though they were originally written for the piano. And now I am planning my programs for the next season and I will schedule some additional switches.

A composer who has always fascinated me, but who never wrote for the harpsichord is Webern. I am just now working on his *Variations for Clavier* which I think will be wonderful on the harpsichord. They are terribly difficult, I might add. Terribly difficult. But it is a whole new kind of sound in a sense. This fascinates me very much. Even the Bartok *Mikrokosmos* which are for Clavier are perfectly suitable. Many people have had encouraging words about my use of piano music for harpsichord.

Kraft, whom I suppose you could call Stravinsky's alter ego, the man who stayed with Stravinsky and knows absolutely everything about him and his works, has encouraged me very much. I am hoping to record them in the future.

HANEY: You are the founder of the Harpsichord Music Society, could you give us some information on that organization?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: I consider the Harpsichord Music Society one of the more important things in my life. That came about through this business of commissioning works.

When I started to commission I paid nobody anything. Later I spoke to the man who was the head of the Rockefeller Foundation and asked him if it would be possible to get some

money to be able to pay these composers for the work they were doing. His reply was not encouraging.

He told me that he could not help me as an individual. That gave me an idea.

I spoke to some friends who were also interested in helping composers and we formed the Harpsichord Music Society. The chief purpose of the Society was to commission new works. And that we can now do. We commission works and we pay for them. Also we sponsor certain concerts and scholarships.

In the beginning, I was giving scholarships on my own. Now the Society gives scholarships to students and we have had some very gifted students. But this is not all.

We have held harpsichord forums

where we have discussions by experts on special subjects. This would include certain periods of music, specific composers, etc. The Harpsichord Music Society has helped very much to encourage young artists as well as expand interest in the instrument. The Society was founded, I believe, in 1957. Before that I did everything on my own.

HANEY: Is the Harpsichord Music Society a member society?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: No. It is not a membership society. It would be too complicated. We have about half a dozen people on the board who are interested in this type of activity and we meet several times a year to decide what's to be done, who is to be commissioned and what will be the program for the following year. This is a very small group, but even so, it is sometimes difficult to get everyone together for a meeting. Right now, one member is in Europe, another is on tour and by the time they have returned, someone else is gone. We must keep it small in order to get things done. I believe in this because of one of my chief aims in life.

That aim is my love of work. One of the hardest things is simply to cut out the enormous number of things life presents you with and sit quietly and do your work. If we enlarge the Society to include many members it would just be a chore and we wouldn't accomplish anything more than we do now. I just don't have the time to do it. Whatever time in life I have left I want to be able to devote to my music. This is my large goal in life . . . to be quiet so I can do my work.

HANEY: During your tours I understand you take your own instrument, but have you ever been compelled to play a harpsichord which was not yours, and which made your work more difficult?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Oh yes. Yes indeed! I recall, not so long ago, I was playing in Geneva at the International Festival for Harpsichordists. I was doing three concerti with Ernest Ansermet; the Rieti which I had commissioned, De Falla and I believe



Bach. We started to rehearse and Ansermet turned to me and said "My dear, I see you playing but I can not hear you."

I was playing a Pleyel and it was like playing on cotton. It had no sound yet it was a big instrument. Finally he had to use earphones since he was standing behind the Pleyel and it was so quiet. I have very live instruments, particularly the Dowd, and when I went back to the Pleyel after all these years I was astounded. It had practically no sound. On recordings it can be enormous, but then you can amplify anything. But I had another experience which was equally distressing.

I played in the Berlin festival a few years ago and took my Challis. The concert was held in this very large hall, and I made it absolutely clear that the instrument had to be amplified. Well, one would almost think that it was sabotage by the Neupert people because they had an amplified harpsichord which I did not want to use, but the people in charge would not amplify my Challis enough for that huge space. It was very, very upsetting to me. If the harpsichord is played in big halls, with big symphonies, it must be amplified. I don't think there is any question about that. When playing solo, or chamber music that is something else. And then there was London.

I remember doing the Goldberg Variations on a Tom Goff harpsichord. He wasn't there but his workmen were there. It wasn't well regulated and he uses real quill, not Delrin. When playing one of these lovely variations, I believe it was the 26th which is a slow work, I wanted to use the nasard and half the notes were not playing. I simply had to stop and change my registration. That's why I certainly prefer to take my own instruments. I can handle them myself if necessary.

HANEY: Many years ago, the tuning and maintaining of an instrument were taught right along with learning to play. Do you think this should be done today?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Oh yes. I feel

that these young students have it easy. They have it made today.

I started by myself. I had to figure everything out. Nobody told me anything. And this was true even with my relationship to Landowska.

She came to this country, I believe around 1940, and I played in her master classes. I didn't study with her, but she used me. She would call and ask me to play various works and she would have this program prepared. I was somewhat of a guinea pig for her. I would ask her "How would you play this ornament" or "How would you do this?" and she would answer; "My dear, I have spent 50 years of my life working on this and I am not just going to tell you how like that!" While, with my pupils, I try to give them everything I can. Things that I have had to work a lifetime to learn. I believe this is something a teacher must do if their students are going to profit from the relationship.

Nowadays, the kids are all spoiled. One hands it all to them on a silver platter. Now there are beautiful recordings which are easy to obtain. Harpsichords are everywhere. One can become very discouraged when a student doesn't continue his studies. I love working with my students, especially the serious, gifted ones, and I only take people I feel have a certain gift. It's a shame that so few of them will go on. It requires a certain passion, even if you are gifted. I've had very gifted students who wound up as salesmen, truck drivers or I don't know what all. It is not an easy profession. It takes a great seriousness of purpose to continue.

HANEY: Have you changed your registration of numbers in later years?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Oh yes. That I have had to do. I was brought up in the Landowska school. By that I mean that she was the harpsichordist of the time and I listened to her. I knew her very well having played in her master classes and, of course, I studied her recordings too. My original learning of registration was based on that. I have revised that completely now.

I don't have a sixteen foot register any more and Landowska very of-

ten leaned too heavily on the sixteen foot. She did many things that I don't approve of at all now. She was marvelous however. She created herself and her own ideas of harpsichord music and that was fine for her. I find that young performers who imitate Landowska today are horrible! I can't bear it. She did all sorts of things with rubato and crescendo and the use of the sixteen foot. I don't do any of those things.

My playing and registration has become much more simplified. I must admit, that particularly with some contemporary works, I miss the sixteen foot.

I had a Dowd with a sixteen foot but it wasn't very good. In fact, he just won't build them any more. Of course, there are some works where the sixteen foot works very well . . . like the DeFalla. But in general, harpsichord playing has changed radically. Not only as far as registration, but in clarity of line and the rhythm is much straighter. When I listen to some of my very old recordings I find that I too played like Landowska during my early period, which is normal. One grows up with a certain ideal or a certain teacher, then it is necessary to branch out on your own to mature. *HANEY: Do you find that your students tend to over register?*

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Well, some do, but it is no longer the fashion. Now the fashion is exactly the opposite. The new wave of harpsichordists go for absolutely no registration at all, which I believe is a mistake. I make this point in my edition of Couperin, published by Schirmer. Couperin wrote out very complicated registrations for his organ works, but not for the harpsichord. However, one assumes that he would use the same system. There are certain harpsichordists, very well known and very well thought of, who use no registration. They play everything on one eight foot.

Leonhardt is a very fine harpsichordist, but he plays almost everything on one eight foot. He makes very little change.

(Continued on page 18)

The Harpsichord — 11

HARPISCHORD

of NOTE

by Bjarne Dahl

Northwest of Stockholm, Sweden, on Lake Malaren lies one of the most fantastic collections in the world. It includes literature, military weaponry, tapestries, astronomical and scientific equipment, furniture, machine tools, glasswork, and numerous other artifacts preserved and totally intact and in remarkably



Stockholm,
Lake Malaren
the most fan-
tions in the
ades of liter-
y, tapestries,
ic equipment,
s, glasswork,
acts preserved
in remarkably

excellent condition from the 17th Cen-
tury. All of these artifacts were liter-
ally unknown to date, except in the
highest royal and private circles. These
fantastic treasures lie in a baroque
castle called "Skokloster Slott."

The castle has, until 1967, been
owned by the family of Baron Rut-
gers Von Essen. In 1967, the castle
and all its treasures were formally giv-
en over to the Swedish Government to
be preserved and held in trust for all
time. The value of the treasure and
castle is estimated from a low of 35

million to a high of 125 million dol-
lars; and, as far as I know, it will be
years before the true value is known.
As an example, there are countless
floor to ceiling tapestries by Gobelin,
the famous French mid-15th Century
dye works which switched to superb
tapestries in 1601. They produced the
finest tapestries ever woven. There are
a wide selection of paintings including
two originals by Vettichino, the renaiss-
ance fantasy artist, who today would
be considered surrealist. There is a
library of 35,000 volumes in Latin,
and an armory of at least 5,000 weap-
ons including a personal hunting rifle

which belonged to Queen Christina.
Of great interest and importance is a
machine shop, which is the best pre-
served workshop in the world and in-
cludes lathes, drillpresses, forging
tools, slavewheels, and other equip-
ment, all intact and original. There is
also a scientific laboratory and ob-
servatory with telescopes dating from
the time of Galileo. In addition to this,
there is a fantastic collection of jewel-
ry, furniture, and just about every-
thing else that can dazzle the eye and
stagger the imagination. The most sur-
prising fact of all this is that, except
for the plumbing and electricity in
the building, nothing dates later than
the year 1675! And this comes from
none other than Fredrik Von Essen
himself.



The reason for this fantastic accumulation of wealth is the 30 Years War. In 1621 Gustav Adolphus II of Sweden launched an invasion of Poland which forced the world to realize that Sweden was on its way to great power. The Swedes swept down through the Balkans and Germany and pressed the borders of France! They plundered practically all of Germany and the Netherlands. Karl Gustav Wrangel, along with Konigsmarck, looted among other palaces along the Moldau, the famous Hradshin. The treasures from these palaces are now located at Drottningholm Palace, Uppsala, and at Skokloster Slott.

When the 30 Years War ended in 1648, Von Wrangel, who was a famous Swedish general, commissioned the castle of Skokloster to be built to house his treasure. He employed as his architect, Tessin the Elder, and with slight variation and ownership, the castle remains as it was originally built! Among these treasures in this castle are two musical instruments of musical and historical value. An excellent baroque organ, and our subject, "The Skokloster Harpsichord."

During my visit to Sweden in 1967, Dr. Emsheimer, who is director of the Musikhistoriska Museet in Stockholm, told me of this very interesting harpsichord that lay in the castle called "Skokloster." My wife and I made a personal visit, met Fredrik Von Essen who showed us the private apartments and the Skokloster Harpsichord. None of the apartments or the harpsichord were ever shown to the public. What I discovered in the Baron's apartment was an authentic, basically unrestored harpsichord with features so unusual that I think it worthwhile to bring this instrument to public notice.

According to experts with whom I have consulted, this instrument must have been built around 1630-1650. The Latin is basically "Kitchen Latin" in that the artist who inscribed the verses knew very little about Latin grammar. The photos will tell the story to those who know Latin. I need not make further comment. The

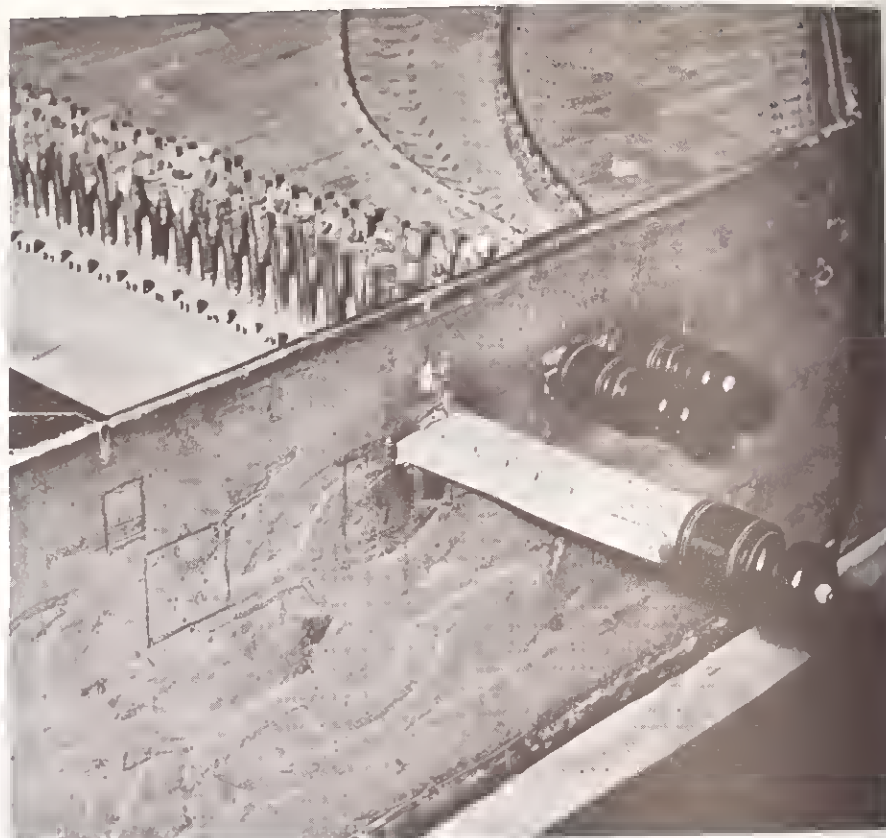


Photo courtesy Musikhistoriska Museet, Stockholm

One jack slide, with jacks removed, is shown pulled out of the case beyond its usual playing position.

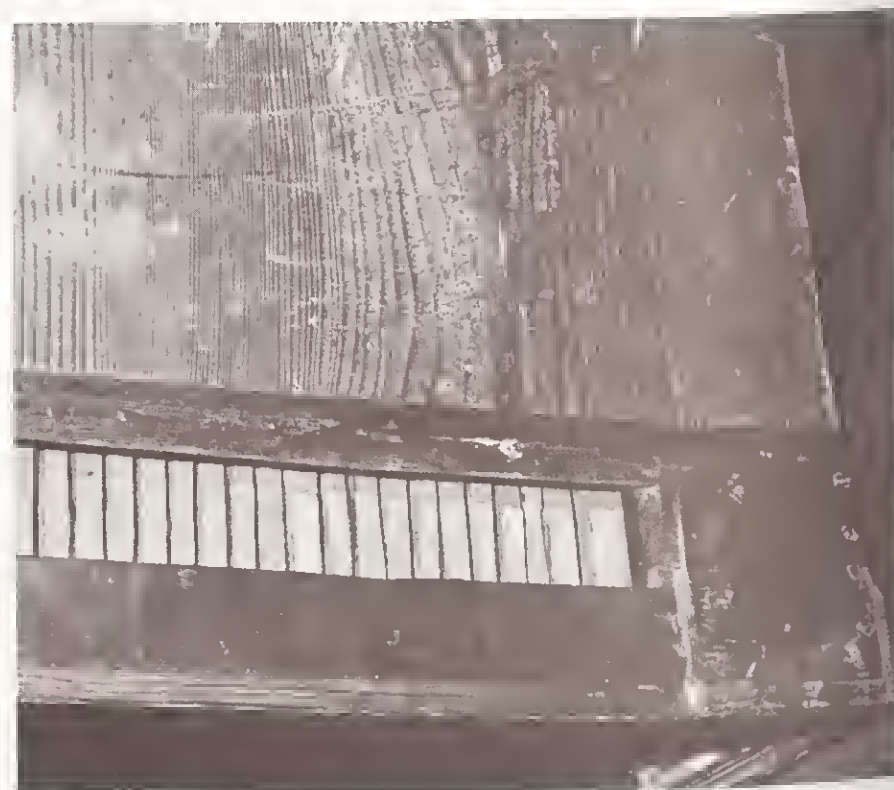


Photo courtesy Musikhistoriska Museet, Stockholm

This photo of the bottom of the instrument, shows a slot positioned under key levers. This may have been done to connect it to a pedal clavier or perhaps a cabinet organ. (It is also reminiscent of the slots found in the back of a clavicitherium for jack adjustment, Ed.)

harpichord appears to be Flemish. It is a single manual with 45 keys E to C and, apparently, an instrument made to be part of an organ or an organ-harpichord combination like the Thewees instrument in the Victoria-Albert Museum in London.

The most interesting feature I have discovered is the fact that this harpichord employs the oldest evidence of the "English Lute" or "Nasard." This is in effect a row of 8' jacks that have plucking points very close to the 8' wrestplank bridge or nut. The slides are of the Flemish style "push-slides" with knobs to the right check side. There are Flemish style decorations on the soundboard, and the disposition is of 8'-8'-4" dimensions. The keyboard action is obviously a "splayed-out" action, very ingeniously designed for maximum jack string clearance. This accounts for the narrow octave range and the wide wrestplank area. Other curious factors are the dove-tailed joints on the casework and the break on the "bent-side" of the instrument. The tenon joints are also visible on the casework, and the strapwork appears quite original. The tuning pins are of the anvil-beaten flayed-out type, and the jacks are of the antique style in Flemish order. On the instrument proper, no signatures have been yet discovered. The painting is on a gesso type foundation and overall appears to be painted upon pinewood. The bottom boards are straight thru, and no breaks occur until the key-tracker hole appears. I do not at present know how the bracing is constructed as this instrument has not been dismembered to my knowledge as yet. The soundboard is of pine and in very good condition. The stand, unfortunately, is missing. A local technician has tried to restring and make this instrument playable. This was done just before this instrument was turned over to the Musikhistoriska Museet, and I have no recent reports as to the present condition of this instrument. As a result of my investigations, I can only conclude that the Nasard or Nasal or English Lute, whatever you may call it, definitely existed in the middle 17th Century



Photo courtesy Musikhistoriska Museet, Stockholm

The keyboard is to the left of this photo. The close plucking jack slide has been partially withdrawn and the jacks removed. Notice how very close to the nut this action has been placed. Not all tuning pins are in place which explains the seemingly curious arrangement.

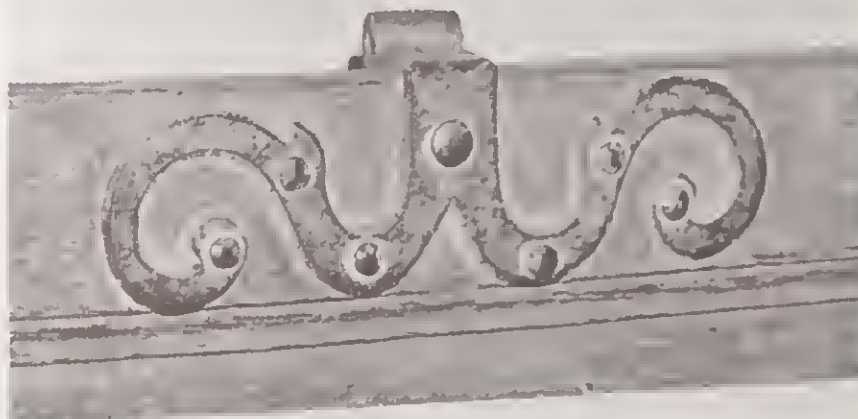


Photo courtesy Musikhistoriska Museet, Stockholm
A beautiful bit of hand made detailing on the lid hinge.

or earlier. One other fine example of this feature is the Couchet that is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and is prominently featured in Vol. 1, No. 2 of *The Harpsichord*, May-July 1968.

Both 4' and 8' bridges are quite high and quite a bit of "down-draft" is allowed. The workmanship is a bit on the rough order cabinet-wise, but I must allow that the instrument is well done in accordance with the Flemish or North-German style. The sound-board rose is elaborate but shows no signs of any particular signature or identity of the builder. It appears to be a strictly decorative fixture. If one examines the bottom boards, one will observe by the nailholes, rather well placed cross braces; and this, coupled with the fact that this instrument has survived for around 350 years intact, makes me marvel at this unique design. The wide cheek pieces are unique also, and I believe this is uncommon. The sealing appears to be of the Flemish "longsealed" order with considerable distance between the 8' sound-board bridge and the 8' hitch-pin rail on top of the case liner on the plan view. There are no double hitch pins on the bridges, and a good Italian style of angle pull on the strings is noticed. No harmful effects appear from this style of string draft, and I tend to consider this a very good point to notice.

As my time was limited, I was not able to get all the measurements or details that I desired; so I just took down the basic information and could, with my rule-scale, figure out the layout and dimensions overall at a later date. The photos will give jack and slide detail as well as construction and base detail. (Notice the tenon joints where the wrest-plank and belly rail are exposed through the case.) Time has caused the miterings and jointings to shrink, and therefore they are visible where the shrinkage is affected.

This harpsichord has a buff stop along the 8' nut bridge, and this affects or works on the dark 8' strings. There are two 8' strings, one of a dark nature where the plucking points are at a distance from the nut bridge, and



Photo courtesy Musikhistoriska Museet, Stockholm

This painting is positioned as if it were originally painted for a clavicytherium, i.e. the scene is viewed correctly when the instrument stands on end as it does in this photo. It is of interest to note that the best portrait in the work is neither the shepherd nor the piper but the small dog who dominates the panel. This divergence from the established style of the major elements might suggest that the dog was painted by a different artist and at a later date.

the other is the "English Lute" or Nasard or Nasal, whatever it may be called. The effects of these strings in unison must be startling to say the least. The 4' jacks are furthest away from the keyboard, and all these factors combine to produce an extraordinary and unusual harpsichord with fantastic effects in register.

This instrument proves to me that people in the 17th Century did strive for variety in tone and color and were not at all restricted in their tastes as

some modern musicologists would have us believe.

This is one of the very few unaltered survivors of the 17th Century. It is hard to say that this instrument represents any particular style or school of thought. However I say to those who doubt the existence of the lute and buff and 4' and 16', etc., etc., that these ideas came from somewhere, did they not? Look closely at this instrument and see what you think!

Bjarne Dahl



Photo courtesy Musikhistoriska Museet, Stockholm

If one looks closely, the tenon joints can be seen on the straight side.



Photo courtesy Musikhistoriska Museet, Stockholm

This quarter view shows the excellent state of preservation of the instrument. (The unusual and extremely heavy brace-like moulding around the front section of the straight side and cheek board makes us wonder if this harpsichord didn't originally start life as a clavicitherium. Ed.)

The Harpsichord — 17

MARLOWE

(Continued from page 11)

HANEY: Do you think that this change to very pure playing may someday swing back to the Landowska style of playing?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: This is what I feel about it. Landowska had a tremendous job to do. She was the first. She was selling the harpsichord and she did everything she could to make it as brilliant, as attractive and as varied as possible. Not only with registration, but with tempi, startling rests and all sorts of things. Now the so-called pure school has taken over.

My feeling about that is that there should be a balance between the two. And I believe that composers feel this also.

Any composer, no matter what school whether he is twelve tone, electronic, neo-classic or what, is interested in one thing.

How does it sound?

I think that composers have always been interested in what their music was going to sound like. The idea of playing in a very boring way, without any change in color or tempo or anything is . . . well . . . boring. I think that any music has to come alive. I don't think one should exaggerate on one hand by making dramatic changes all the time, but I think it is necessary to use different colors. I see nothing wrong with it. Besides, the instrument has these possibilities which should be exploited. Why does it have a four foot if you are not going to use it? Why does it have a harp stop if you are not going to use it? Or a nasard, or *Peau de Buffle*, or whatever? Why?

Many of my recent students would not dream of playing an instrument with pedals. In the late 18th century they had pedals. This whole nonsense of purity is a bore.

HANEY: Do you encourage your students to own a clavichord?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: I would encourage any keyboard instrumentalist to have a clavichord. I find that the sensitivity of the sound and touch is marvelous. Playing on the harpsichord all the time is like thinking out loud.

But play on the clavichord and you are thinking inside yourself. It is a very personal inner thing. I use the clavichord enormously. Very few harpsichordists do. Landowska never had a clavichord. It's something I couldn't be without. I have always said that if I were going to be on a deserted island and had a choice of one thing I could take, I think it would be a clavichord.

I have very strong feelings about the clavichord. When I was a child and studied piano, the instrument was in the living room. There were always people coming in or out and making comments about my work. I was always performing out loud. This used to embarrass me terribly. I think the idea of going over and over something, which is very often necessary, is a very disagreeable thing to do when other people are present. Even when I was a student in Paris, I had a little apartment and people would start banging on the walls while I was playing the piano and shouting "Stop that noise." This happens all the time. There is something about always playing out loud that is very repugnant.

I have been working with clavichords for many, many years and it is very much a part of my life. Any time of the day or night I can just sit there and be quiet. I take my little Challis clavichord with me everywhere. It is a marvelous instrument. I set it up wherever I go and can work to my heart's content. The great thing about these Challis clavichords is that they don't need any attention. They just stay, year in and year out. I think it would make a great deal of difference to the whole young generation who are interested in studying keyboard instruments if they had clavichords. I think it's a pity that the clavichord is not more popular than it is. HANEY: Do you have any suggestions as to how it could become more popular?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Well, your magazine is certainly one way. And articles about the value of this instrument.

HANEY: What do you think about clavichord recordings?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Not much.

The clavichord is your personal instrument. It is your private instrument. Your home instrument. Your bedroom instrument. Your inner life. I do not think it is a performing instrument. Ralph Kirkpatrick has given concerts in New York on an amplified clavichord and it is not satisfactory. Thurston Dart has recorded clavichord, Igor Kipnis and many others as well. Kirkpatrick has recorded the entire Well-Tempered on the clavichord which I think is a complete flop. I don't believe the clavichord was ever intended to be used in that way. I've never recorded on the clavichord. I've fussed a little with the idea but I've never felt it would be successful and I don't believe there is really any such thing as real clavichord music. I play everything on the clavichord for my own pleasure and benefit, but I wouldn't dream of performing on it.

HANEY: Do you believe young composers will start composing for clavichord?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: No. Except as a gimmick. Everybody goes in for gimmicks now.

The other night I went to a concert in Tully Hall here at Lincoln Center and heard a piece by Angelo Luciano Berio, a very gifted man. In fact, he was supposed to write a piece for me a few years ago. The piece I heard was a new work for electronic harpsichord and electronic piano.

I thought it was just ghastly! As soon as it started I recognized the gimmick because the harpsichord was being played so quietly it was almost inaudible. Since it was electronic it could be turned to any volume, and I decided the gimmick was that it would build up to a tremendous crescendo which would be ear-splitting. Which was what it did. It's not a real harpsichord. It's something Baldwin puts out which is for rock groups I guess. I found it shoddy. The piano sounded like a piano. I wouldn't dream of commissioning anyone to write for the clavichord.

HANEY: Do you believe the popularity of the harpsichord will continue?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Well, of course that is a difficult question to

answer, but my feeling is that since my time, the interest has certainly risen steadily. I do not see why it can not continue, for several reasons.

First, the harpsichord has the largest available literature of almost any solo instrument. While everything seems to be played, there is still a lot that is not played and not recorded. We have all these fantastically prolific composers beginning with the 16th century. The surface is not really scratched. Even in this day where everybody is doing "The complete" this and "The complete" that, there is still much waiting to be done. Since the harpsichord is an old instrument, there is a tremendous amount of literature that is not really known.

Secondly, I think the harpsichord will have a new life with contemporary music in various forms. I have played jazz on the instrument and was the first harpsichordist to do so many years ago. Not too long ago I did a Purcell recording and recognized a similarity with Purcell's grounds and blues and boogie. So I did some of Purcell's grounds and a rhythm section at one of my concerts and the critics went wild. They loved them.

This whole form of the ground bass was used very much in the early days as far back as the 15th century. Then it died for a time and later was taken up in the form of Blues. Blues and Boogie are all this 8-to-the-bar music and that's what the ground bass is. I'm very interested in experimenting with all kinds of ideas, if they have a certain validity.

At the moment the young people have a great interest in the harpsichord and, after all, if it is going to survive, it must survive through our new generations.

HANEY: Speaking of new generations and the young students just now beginning, how would you direct their progress in learning to play the harpsichord?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: I have my students do the Bach two part inventions. If they have access to an instrument and a good teacher, that is a big help. I think the clarity of two voiced music

and phrasing and ornamentation is excellent. From there one can progress to the three part inventions, then suites and so on. Then I find a lot of the shorter, easier compositions to be found in the Fitzwilliams Virginal book are helpful. Of course, some of them are very difficult and technical, but the short, one page pieces are interesting rhythmically and interesting to play.

Anyone who is interested in playing can learn to play today. It is much simpler now. In my day there were not all these thousands of recordings, thousands of good editions and thousands of performers and so on. If someone is smart, and serious and interested in learning the harpsichord, they have all the material in the world to work with. But they do have to have some brains and some interest, and it helps if they have talent.

HANEY: How would you answer a student who asked you about the advisability of becoming a professional harpsichordist?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: I would tell them that it is very tough. That's first. It's not easy. I was lecturing once at a university and a student asked: "Are your chances better at making money with the piano or with the harpsichord?" I answered; "Forget it!"

I discourage students from believing they can become successful as a full time professional. Of course if you find someone who is extremely gifted, which is rare, then you will do everything to encourage them and to help them along. I have done this with my students. Now you can get jobs in colleges and universities as a harpsichordist which didn't exist when I was young. This limits you somewhat because you must live and stay where the university is located, whether this is in the middle of nowhere or not. But one must think about making a living. Making a living as a harpsichordist is very difficult.

HANEY: Are there any professional performances you have given which stand out in your mind as being memorable?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Yes. In that sense, I think some of the concerts I

did in the Far East were the most staggering for me.

I went in 1956 and there had never been a harpsichord in that area before. I played Singapore, Hong Kong, Jakarta. I played 40 concerts in Indonesia. Many of these were outdoors and I would have three or four thousand people. Of course my harpsichord had to be amplified. The audiences were fantastic.

One of my friends who is dead now, the American composer Colin McPhee, lived in Bali and gave me some Balinese music which he had transposed. Of course they expected me to play American music since I was from America, but when I played their own music, which they had not expected, they went wild! They went crazy. They were the most exciting and largest audiences I have ever experienced. They would start lining up early in the day for tickets.

The toughest place to play is New York City. There is too much competition. And also, everyone is so jaded because there is so much, but that is not true in the Far East. They wanted me to go on and on, but I became so exhausted I had to stop after four months touring. Fantastic audiences. I had never even heard of a lot of these places, but the audiences were more exciting than any I have ever known. I met all the heads of state. Sukarno came to my concerts. Nehru came to my concerts.

About five years ago I toured South America and curiously, I met with the same kind of thing. Fantastically large audiences. The interest in harpsichords is certainly there, but I think there is another contributing factor.

That is the Zuckermann kit. Wherever I've played, all over the world, people come up to me and tell me that they are building a harpsichord. When I was young I used to go with them and help regulate the instrument and what not, but you can spend your whole life working on other people's harpsichords so I have given that up. But the kit instrument has popularized the harpsichord a great deal. There is no doubt about it. And this

has happened all over the world. In South America when I arrived in Rio, immediately I had letters from kit builders; in Asia, everywhere. Zuckermann has done a great deal for the harpsichord.

HANEY: Is there anything about your life or career that I have not covered that you would like our members to know?

SYLVIA MARLOWE: Well, I can start by relating an incident which involved an old friend of mine, Virgil Thompson. When I told him I was planning to get married, he said, "The harpsichord is a very jealous instrument. I don't see how you are going to manage to have a husband and a harpsichord." Fortunately I have a very nice husband, but the truth is that the harpsichord is a very demanding instrument and to pursue a career as a harpsichordist, you must be able to divorce yourself from a great many things in life that you might otherwise find very agreeable. But of course, in a sense, that is true of any serious career. Any serious career requires self obligation, devotion and denial. A very pretty young girl came to me just recently who was considering a career as a harpsichordist and told me how she had to give up so much. And of course, that is the truth. It's worth it, I think, because I believe there is nothing more gratifying than wanting to do something you love and doing it well.

Many people think that they will take up the harpsichord because it is a toy, it's with it, it's chic and so on. That is a lot of nonsense. The harpsichord is a very serious and demanding instrument. I think it is one of the most beautiful instruments we have today.

The harpsichord is a very important part of my life. Sometimes more than I realize. My husband knows this only too well.

I had a very strenuous season, I had the flu and was tired and exhausted so we decided to go to Florida for a few weeks. I was so tired I could hardly pack my bag, but my husband wanted to know if we should take the Challis clavichord. I told him that I



didn't think so because I didn't have the strength to play even one note. He suggested we put it in the case anyway. When it was time to leave, he suggested that we take it with us.

Well the truth is, after two days down there in the sun and air, I wanted to get back to playing. I worked for several hours every morning and evening and I know now that I never would have been able to stay there without my clavichord. I felt well after three or four days and I would have insisted on going back. I don't know whether it is compulsive, but it is a very serious part of my life. I can't be without an instrument.

Morning is my work time. I am very jealous of my mornings. That's my best time. If I get a good morning's work done, then I am satisfied. But there is one last thing that I believe is important about my career which apparently is not important to some other professionals.

I am not a performer who can be satisfied having only two or three pro-

grams in my repertoire and spend the rest of my life playing them. If you look through either my discography or my programs you will see that I have an enormous repertoire. And even now, at my age, I am still learning new music. Not that I don't like going back to certain of the old great things, but it keeps me interested and it keeps the audience interested. So many performers one knows are very gifted, but when Columbia signs them up, they go off touring after learning two or three programs and they go on playing these same things for the rest of their lives.

Of course what I do is much more demanding and much more luxurious, having new work to do. But also you must have the interest and imagination and energy to learn them. I am constantly learning new works and I hope that I always will be. Keeping music alive helps keep me alive so my future will be filled with music for as long as I live.

Sylvia Marlowe

NEW COMPANY PRODUCES ANCIENT INSTRUMENTS

Some time ago your editor visited the ghost town of Randsburg, located in the Mojave Desert of California, where Witcher and Hunnell were operating the Renaissance and Baroque Musical Instruments Company. A tour of the town and their instrument building facilities resulted in an unusual and interesting interview for *The Harpsichord* which was scheduled for a future issue. Just days ago, we received a letter from Jay Witcher relating some exciting changes which we think are of general interest. Parts of his letter are quoted here:

"A lot has taken place since your visit to Randsburg. We had to abandon our shop last summer when the town's water system failed. The Renaissance and Baroque Musical Instruments Company is no more. Recently I moved to Forestville (about 60 miles north of San Francisco) and founded a new company known as Ancient Instruments, and am now working full-time at musical instrument making as well as supplying kits to builders who want to construct their own instruments.

"The instruments we produce are patterned after, and in many cases are exact copies of, instruments by famous makers of the 16th-18th centuries. The original designs, materials and scalings have been faithfully adhered to. However, in the construction of our harpsichords, modern engineering practice has been followed in the arrangement of the internal bracing.

"The harpsichords are made with cases of $\frac{1}{2}$ " thickness or less, depending on the size of the instrument. Virginals and spinets have cases proportionately less in thickness. In the clavichords, the case is also the frame. Vertical grain spruce is used for soundboards as it was in the old instruments and in good guitars and violins.

The stringed instruments have maple sides and backs with vertical grain spruce tops. The woodwinds are made of maple or similar hardwoods.

All faithfully adhere to the old sizes and scalings, with the exception that almost all the instruments correspond to present day pitch (A-440.)

"In our literature, the terms English, Flemish, etc., mean that the instrument follows the design of the best known instruments of that particular country or school of makers; i.e. the English model is patterned after a concert model made by Kirekman, c. 1770; the Flemish is patterned after the large harpsichords of the Ruckers family, c. 1610 and the German model is an exact copy of a large harpsichord built by Hass, c. 1734. The 2-manual instruments place the first 8' on the upper keyboard and the second 8', 4' and 16' are on the lower keyboard. Couplers are manual using the traditional sliding keyboards. All our keyboards have vertical grain rosewood naturals and maple and rosewood sharps."

The list of instruments available from Ancient Instruments is very impressive. Their least expensive finished instrument is a Renaissance flute of wood for \$20. From here it ranges up to a completed German double manual harpsichord, FF-f3, 5 octaves, upper manual 8' and lute, lower manual 8', 4', 16' with both 8' and 16' buff, coupler, hand controls, 110" x 38" x 40" for \$4,800, F.O.B. Forestville. This instrument is also available in a three manual version.

In addition to the above instruments their production includes; Double and single strung clavichords; Italian Polygonal Spinets; English and Flemish harpsichords both double and single manual; Virginals; 3-string Medieval Gigs; 6-string Lira de Braccio; 10-string Cittern; 10-key diatonic scale Hurdy Gurdys; 5-string Epinette des Vosges; 24-string minstrel's harps; 3-string dulcimers, 13-string psaltry plus a large selection of woodwinds including Treble, Alto, Tenor and Bass Krumphorns; Treble, Alto, Tenor and Bass Cornamusa; Renaissance Flutes; Baroque Oboe d'



Jay Witcher adjusts a clavichord.

Amour; Racket; Chalumeau; Cornett and Mute Cornett.

At present three kits are available. The most popular is the table model clavichord; all parts are pre-cut to size and ready to assemble. The keyboards are pre-cut with vertical-grain rosewood naturals and maple and rosewood sharps. All necessary parts are supplied including tuning pins, hitchpins, music wire, felt, base, case, lid, tuning wrench and completely illustrated, detailed instructions. The price is \$100.

An Italian Polygonal Virginal kit is also available which is similar to the instrument illustrated in "*Harpsichord of Note*", Volume II, No. 2. All parts are pre-cut to size and ready to assemble. The finished instrument measures 60" x 21½" x 7½". It contains 4½ octaves, C to f3. Vertical grain rosewood natural keys with maple and rosewood sharps. Keyboard is pre-cut and all parts are supplied including tuning pins, hitchpins, wire, felt, tuning wrench, jack parts, case, mouldings, etc. Only a few hand tools needed for assembly. This kit instrument is priced at \$300.

The third kit is new on the American market, a 3-stringed, 10-key diatonic scale Hurdy Gurdy. All parts are pre-cut and ready to assemble. The price is \$75.

For more information on the above and other instruments, write to J. Witcher, Ancient Instruments, P. O. Box 552, Forestville, California 95436.

LETTERS

Dear Mr. Haney:

I don't mean to be nit-picking about the subject, but I would like to point out with reference to F. H. Miller's article on the Broadwood grand (Vol. IV, No. 2, p. 5) and his mention of the recording of Haydn's music on it, that, while to the casual listener all 18th century pianos may sound alike, especially when compared to the modern piano, in fact in those days there were at least two distinct schools of piano manufacture: the English and the Viennese, with corresponding schools of composition based on the sound and technique involved. Two very recent articles clearly point out this fact: "Beethoven's pianos versus his piano ideals" by William S. Newman (*American Musicological Society Journal*, 23:3, Fall, 1970), and a review by Stoddard Lincoln of some Clementi piano sonatas (MHS 970 — played on a so-called Mozart piano) in the *American Record Guide*, 37:4, December 1970, in which he points out that Clementi, as one of the leading composers of the London pianoforte school and one of the leading piano manufacturers along with Broadwood, conceived his music for the heavier English instrument, and indeed "it is a brilliant *tour de force* on the English instrument, for which it was written, and an overblown farce on the Viennese one." Likewise to play Mozart, Haydn, or even Beethoven (see Newman's article on this score) on an English piano is to disregard historical evidence. I always think it a joke on themselves when recorder players play 16th century music on 18th century instruments, when clearly the Renaissance recorder was much different from the Baroque one. Yet again the untrained ear, used to modern instruments, doesn't notice such things.

Concerning Dr. Scroggs' article on the Italian Harpsichord, there are two recordings I know of which contain music played on old Italian instruments, both of which also contain

music played on instruments from other countries, so one can hear the sound differences: Telefunken SAWT 9512-B, Gustav Leonhardt playing an anon. Italian instrument of 1693 located at the Smithsonian in Washington; Oryx 1725, Michael Thomas playing Frescobaldi on an instrument of Franciscus de Paulinis, 1726, and a Zipoli suite on an Alessandro Cresci Pilano harpsichord of Levano, 1760.

George K. Huber
Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

Dear Hal,

There are two inaccuracies in the Dowd article in Volume IV, No. 1, of **THE HARPSICHORD**.

1. To describe Pleyel as the chief Anti-Christ of them all is incorrect. Pleyel harpsichords use wooden jacks and leather plectra. As everyone knows, leather pre-dated the use of crow quill in plectra. No antique instruments used Delrin plectra or plastic jacks.

2. Wanda Landowska did not always play with a certain type of touch because of Pleyel she used. She employed at least six different touches which could be produced at will on any of her fingers independently of the rest. Listening to the recordings makes this obvious. Pleyel harpsichords do not limit in any way the touches that can be used.

William Deakyné
Rowayton, Connecticut

Dear Mr. Haney:

At the suggestion of James Weaver of the Smithsonian, I am writing to announce the completion of the first copy, to our knowledge, of a 17th century French non-transposing harpsichord. It is an exact copy of the 1652 Jaquet harpsichord, made in Paris but now in the Ringling Museum, Sarasota, Fla. It has a compass of GG/BB-d³ (the original stopped on c³) 8-8-4 hand stops and a buff may later be added to the copy. Considering the importance of the 17th century French music, we feel that it is very appropriate to build copies of these rare French instruments of the period. Miss Shirley Mathews performed the

dedication concert on this harpsichord at Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland on June 1.

In addition to the above mentioned two manual harpsichord, in the past we have been engaged in producing copies of a later French harpsichord by De De Ban, 1770, two different Italian instruments and clavichords. We are at the moment restoring an anon. 18th century German clavichord owned by Yale University. As you probably know, I am the former curator of the Smithsonian Collection of Antique Musical Instruments who started the restoration program and performance program there.

Sincerely yours,
John Shortridge
Aldie, Virginia

Dear Sir,

In view of the growing popularity of spinet and harpsichord kits, I believe your readers may be interested in my experiences. On 16 April 1970 I ordered one of the spinet kits designed by Hubert Bedard for Heugel of Paris and available in this country through United Music Publishers at 94 guineas. Though I was informed that there would be a two-month delay, I did not receive notice that the kit was awaiting collection at U.M.P. until 4 September.

The kit arrived in a stout carton which, although itself damaged, had protected the contents fairly efficiently. On checking the 'list of parts included', five items were found to be missing, and the number of jacks was one short. A letter to Heugel (to whom U.M.P. had pertinently directed that all complaints should be addressed when I collected the kit) was unanswered for several weeks. Eventually I received notice from U.M.P. that the missing parts were awaiting collection at their showrooms. Upon examination the two new jacks supplied were drilled for grub screws of a different size from the others, no new screws of the correct size being supplied. A pupil who had ordered a kit at about the same time experienced a similar delay but received the kit complete. He was, however, obliged to

copy my plan of the spinet as none had been supplied to him.

As admitted by the writer, the instructions are incomplete, but additional confusion was caused by the misnumbering of two pieces and unclear numbering on several others. Although the instructions received by my pupil and myself were identical, and assumed that the keyboard was supplied cut out and with pivot pins in place, my keyboard arrived without pivot pins and with much of the sawing still to be done. A bag of nails provided in the kit for no specified purpose eventually served for the missing pivot pins.

Much more serious than this, however, is the fact that the illustration on the brochure shows the spinet assembled complete with legs and music desk. Inside the brochure states: '1) "Kit". The spinet is sold in separate pieces with all its accessories; detailed instructions . . . : Neither legs, music desk nor hinges for the lid were supplied, though the illustration combined with the above statement gave the impression that they would be. Brief instructions for making a music desk are given, but none for the legs.

The first stage, constructing the frame, went quite easily, though the margin for shrinkage on the bottom board was perhaps a little excessive and involved rather a lot of planing. The soundboard went in easily, but the bridges were of a totally different shape and dimension from those depicted in the plan. The instructions direct that 'if the bridge has a slightly different curve from that of the plan,' the screws with which the bridges are held in position while the glue is drying could force them into shape. This proved impossible: no amount of forcing would have forced my bridges into the shape of the plan, and I abandoned any attempt to follow it for laying out the strings, especially as, being wider from front to back than the actual instrument, it left no room for the bass string to pass the right-hand end of the keyboard recess.

The construction of the keyboard, apart from the extra sawing and placing of the pivot pins, was further held

up by the fact that the holes in the keys for the pivote pins were much too small and had to be completely redrilled.

The jacks were easily assembled, but, as pointed out in your issue of Feb., Mar., April 1971, fine drilling through plastic is hard to do accurately, and these jacks certainly prove the point! The idea of making the spring from an extension of the tongue is dubious — they are proving difficult to adjust, and the plastic easily snaps off if great care is not taken.

Setting the jacks in the soundboard was a lengthy task which, as with the keyboard, was aggravated by the fact that neither the holes in the bottom guide nor in the soundboard were drilled anywhere near large enough. It is obvious that allowance for shrinkage must be made, but a little more care and thought could have saved nearly a day's hard fitting plus a lot of extra drilling.

Stringing brought further delays and difficulties. Four sizes of phosphor-bronze strings were supplied. Less than half way through the second size, the length supplied ran out. It proved impossible to get further supplies in London, so I attempted to find a suitable substitute. Finally, when it turned out that the finest wire supplied would not stand up to the pitch of the top strings and that the reel which had run out was not the size it purported to be, I chucked the lot and restrung it (except for a few bottom strings) in steel, which seems to make a much better sound anyway.

The key dip was enormous, and a length of wood a good half inch thick had to be found to limit the fall of the keys, in addition to the felt supplied, if the limit of the dip was not to be regulated by the jacks coming in contact with the jack bar, which, as I regard the function of a jack bar to be a safety device and not a thumping bar, would have been intolerable. In order to allow the jacks to fit under the jack bar (which obviously cannot be higher than the sides of the case) some 1/4" was cut off the tops of the jacks and a further 1/8"

planed off the bottom of the jack bar. As the depth of the case agreed with the dimensions of the instructions and the keyboard frame is supplied ready made, it is hard to account for the necessity for such drastic adjustments. The instructions and diagrams showing the fixing of the jack bar are useless, as they are so designed that one end being fixed, it is impossible to fix the other! Finally, the lid seems unnecessarily thick and heavy, and it was found advisable to strengthen the back of the case with three vertical struts to help take its weight.

To sum up: the ten days mentioned in the brochure would perhaps be adequate if everything were better thought out and went according to plan. Some of the hazards described above are really inexcusable. All in all, the intended project of a fortnight's summer holiday took the best part of a year to complete.

The finished instrument is far from traditional and makes the usual unresonant sound to be expected from instruments that are heavily built and strung. As a beginner's instrument, it will do, but I doubt whether, with the instructions supplied, it could be assembled by anyone without prior knowledge of harpsichord construction. In short, it is a shame that more thought and better design has not been put into this particular kit; and I cannot accept that the end product is worth all the necessary trouble. It would be hardly more trouble, and infinitely more satisfying, to build one's own design, or copy the measurements from an antique instrument.

Yours sincerely,
Maria Boxall
Bucks, England

HEUGEL ANSWERS

Dear Sir,

We have read with great care Miss Maria Boxall's letter. We have not had the pleasure to meet Miss Boxall and we regret it, as we entertain very good personal relations with a great many of our spinet and harpsichord customers who come and visit us whenever they are in Paris.

In the case of Miss Boxall this personal relationship would have cer-

tainly reduced the disagreements she encountered. At the time, our own production and our distribution in England were at their beginning and we admit very honestly that, owing to a certain inexperience of both our part and our English agent and also to the difficulties of sending kits and parts to England (shipment, import regulation such as deposit for value of the kits, etc.), we have been a little taken short by the great demand for our kits. As already said, things were smoothed down by personal contacts.

In order that your readers may have a fair judgment of this "case" we are sending you, picked up among many others, letters of customers which speak for themselves. We are at the disposal of any of your readers who wish to have further information.

Of course we learned that some buyers had great difficulties in assembling our kits; they had to admit that these difficulties were due to their inexperience in dealings with wood construction. Perhaps this is the case with Miss Boxall and her pupil?

As to the quality of this instrument assembled with the care it deserves, we definitely know that it is excellent but this, one cannot prove: it's a question of having a good ear.

Yours sincerely,
Heugel & Co.
Paris, France

Mr. Haney:

Re: Last issue of *Harpsichord*, p. 9, Dr. Scroggs' statement regarding Italian harpsichord on recording.

The Concentus Musicus of Vienna uses a copy of an Italian harpsichord of 1700 by M. Skowronek. This instrument is used in their recording of the Brandenburg Concerti on Telefunken SAWT 9459/60-A. This recording is about 6 or 7 years old, I believe. In the booklet which accompanies the recording there is one good close-up of the harpsichord which shows clearly that it has a 4' choir. The 4' is much in evidence in Concerto No. 5.

Yours truly,
D. Brosier
Oxnard, California

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